

Kendrick, &c.

A

S E R M O N,

DELIVERED AT

The Third Parish in NEWBURY,

JULY 24, 1794;

OCCASIONED BY THE SUDDEN DEATH
OF EIGHT PERSONS BELONGING
TO THE SOCIETY, WHO WERE
DROWNED IN THE RIVER
MERRIMACK ON THE
NINETEENTH OF
THE SAME
MONTH,

By DAVID TAPPAN, D. D. ✕
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MDCCXCIV.

ST. MARK'S

DELIVERED AT

THE TOWN HALL, NEWBURY.

P. R. F. A. C. E.

JULY 1844

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARK'S, NEWBURY.

OF THE TOWN OF NEWBURY.

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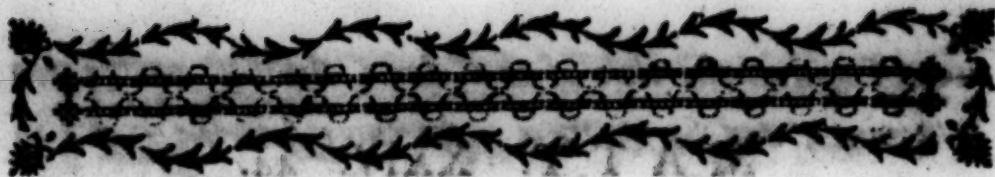
P R E F A C E.

THE occasion of the ensuing Discourse, and the circumstances attending its delivery and publication, were briefly as follow. On the 19th of July last, as a number of persons belonging to the third Parish in Newbury, two of whom were heads of families, the rest young women and children, were sailing in a little boat across the river Merrimack, a sudden gust of wind threw the boat down on one side, in consequence of which it immediately filled and went to the bottom. The two men, who were excellent swimmers, made every effort to save their companions; 'till one of them, exhausted in the attempt, and probably incumbered with some of the children, sunk with them and perished; the other endured the agonizing distress, occasioned by the unavailing cries and struggles of five members of his family, viz. four children and a house-keeper, to whom he could afford no effectual relief; at length disengaging himself from one of them, by a violent exertion, he swam with difficulty to the Newbury shore, and brought to his surviving family and neighbors the first tidings of this awful event. Some of the bodies
were

were found at the close of that day ; the rest on the day following ; and six of them were carried to the grave in one solemn procession. Many circumstances, which cannot here be enumerated, concurred to heighten the distress and surprise of this extraordinary scene of Providence.*

The Author, stopping at Newbury soon after this divine visitation, was persuaded to employ a few hours, amid the arduations and fatigues of a long journey, in composing and delivering the following discourse. His tender and earnest desire of ministering to the comfort and edification of his former people in their present destitute condition, and under a dispensation so serious and alarming, induced his ready consent both to preach and to publish this very hasty address ; which his feeble health and official duties have permitted him barely to transcribe for the press, with very little correction or improvement. — Such as it is, he humbly commends it to the blessing of God, and to the candid and solemn attention of the reader ; and particularly requests the bereaved families and religious Society, to whom it was delivered, to receive it as a small token of the Author's continued friendship and his best wishes for their present and everlasting felicity.

* THE number of the drowned persons was eight ; their names, Edmund Kendrick (who has left a wife and three children) Sarah Brown, Mercy Pillsbury, Mchitable Brown, Nabby Hale, Polly, Rebekah and Joshua Chase ; the four last children of Moses Chase, who was the only person that escaped.



A DISCOURSE, &c.

THE Providence which has now called us together, my dear fellow-mortals and fellow-mourners, is one of the most awful and affecting in its kind, that has ever solicited our attention, or wounded our feelings. How much more pleasing would it have been to the speaker to have met his former people and still beloved friends in this sacred place, upon an occasion very different from the present; an occasion, which would have renewed and elevated their mutual joy and thanksgiving! But he still finds a tender, a heart-felt, though mournful satisfaction in mingling his tears and devotions with theirs, amidst a scene of sudden and complicated bereavements, sufficient to pierce the heart of a stranger and even of a savage with sympathetic grief.

On hearing the intelligence of this solemn dispensation upon my arrival in your vicinity, the following admonition of our divine Lord presented itself to my thoughts, which I shall take for the guide of the ensuing address:—

MATT.

M A T T. XXIV. 44.

BE YE ALSO READY ; FOR IN SUCH AN HOUR AS
YE THINK NOT, THE SON OF MAN COMETH.

I HOPE, my brethren, that the warning contained in these words, which is to be explained and pressed upon you in this discourse, will be heard with peculiar attention and sensibility at this affecting moment. It would give me pain to suppose, that there is one soul in this congregation so given over to a reprobate mind, as to be capable of treating with indifference or contempt, the solemn injunction before us, enforced by the tender and awful voice of eight instantaneous, early, and surprising deaths ! O may that almighty Spirit, which uttered the sacred admonition of the text, and which has visited this Society with so dreadful a comment upon it, enable us all suitably to feel the weight and impression of both. Then the same visitation, which now overwhelms us with sorrow, will prove the occasion of our everlasting joy.

THE text holds up two important ideas, a command, and a motive. The command is, BE YE ALSO READY. The motive or reason of it is, BECAUSE IN SUCH AN HOUR AS YE THINK NOT, THE SON OF MAN COMETH. Let us distinctly consider the import of each.

THE command requiring us to be ready, has respect to our preparation for the second glorious appearing of Christ to judge the world. In its primary reference it may seem to contemplate his then approaching, awful coming, to destroy Jerusalem and to execute signal vengeance on the unbelieving and incorrigible Jews. This terrible divine retribution was a striking emblem and earnest of his still more dreadful appearance for the destruction of a faithless and impenitent world. Hence the prophetic description of the former, is here blended with that of the latter; and both united, form a matchless picture of sublimity and horror. But since to be ready to meet God in any great temporal manifestation, either of his justice or his mercy, implies essentially the same dispositions, with a preparation to meet him in the still more solemn scenes of death and judgment; and since the latter is the most important and comprehensive concern of all human beings; we will therefore confine our attention to the question, what is implied in a readiness for the final coming of our Judge, or (which amounts to the same thing) for our approaching departure by death to the world of retribution?

Now a readiness for this event may be summed up in one idea, viz, a hearty conformity and friendship to the glorious Person who is to be our Judge, and a consequent assurance of his final approving sentence. We cannot be ready to welcome the

visit or appearance of a fellow creature, if our prevailing temper be contrary and inimical to his person and character. Enemies are not prepared for a delightful meeting and intercourse with each other. Such a fellowship is the appropriate privilege of harmonious and friendly souls. There must therefore be a cordial love to Christ, an habitual delight in his image, service, and correspondence, a disposition to welcome his gracious visits, when he approaches us in his outward ordinances and inward communications; otherwise we cannot be ready to meet his last great appearance with submission, confidence, and delight. Adam in Paradise was ready at any moment to meet and converse with his Maker; because he felt an intire union of heart to the divine character, and a consequent assurance of the divine approbation. Whenever he had notice that God was coming towards him, he sprung forward to receive him with that eagerness and rapture, with which intimate friends fly to each other's embraces. But no sooner had he lost a pure heart and approving conscience, than the presence and voice of God, which before filled him with transport, excited in his guilty bosom, a mixture of aversion and horror. He now retreats from the approaching Deity with the same speed, with which he formerly hastened into his presence. A just description of all the apostate children of Adam, so long as they continue opposed to their Creator! In this situation they must feel the

same terror and confusion in the Divine presence, though unspeakably higher in degree, which overwhelm the ungrateful person, the disobedient child, the perfidious friend, the rebellious subject, in the presence of his injured benefactor and parent, friend and sovereign,

Do you then wish to know whether you are ready for the second coming of the Lord? Ask your own heart such plain questions as these——Do I cordially welcome him in his first appearing, or as he is exhibited to view in the dispensation of his gospel? He has already come to me in his written and preached word, and in the offers and strivings of his holy Spirit. Have I given him a hearty and obedient reception? Have I thrown open the everlasting doors of my soul to this King of glory? Are my inward sentiments and dispositions, and my outward actions subjected to his authority, and conformed to his holy doctrine and example? Do I readily embrace his terms of reconciliation and friendship? Do I feel and conduct like a penitent and obedient believer? Does my heart frequently go out to meet its beloved Redeemer in the duties of private and public devotion? Does it sometimes spring forward to his final appearing with holy desire, with elevated, but solemn joy? Does approaching death appear desirable and pleasing to me, as a messenger sent to knock off the remaining fetters of sin and flesh, and introduce me to the

the perfect vision, likeness and enjoyment of my Lord?—If the habitual language of our temper and practice be thus in favour of Christ and religion, we give the best proof of friendship to his cause, and of preparation for his heavenly kingdom: though perhaps our weak flesh and blood may shudder at those awful scenes of death and judgment which must introduce the consummation of our bliss. Which leads us to observe that,

A readiness to meet our dissolution, may be considered as either **HABITUAL** OR **ACTUAL**. The former coincides with the habits of goodness, or a prevailing disposition and course of action conformed to the gospel. This is what the scripture mainly intends by the new man, the new spirit, a state of conversion, of grace and salvation. This habitual conformity of heart and life to the moral perfections and will of God, is absolutely necessary in the nature of things, as well as by divine constitution, to our final happiness in his presence and favour. But persons may possess these holy and virtuous habits, and yet not be ready at any moment to meet death with comfort and honor. In order to this, there must be the present lively exercise of love of God, of trust in his Son, of delight in his service, of acquiescence in his will, of holy contempt of this world, and aspiration after the heavenly felicity. An actual readiness for the coming of our Lord, implies the vigorous
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and conscious exertion of those gracious dispositions, which constitute our habitual preparation for it. It implies the ardent exercise of sentiments and feelings similar to those, with which an affectionate nuptial partner, a dutiful child, or a faithful servant prepares for and expects the return of a distant beloved husband, parent, or master. It imports fervent desire, joyful hope, loyal submission, patient waiting, joined with a careful practical attention to the interest, pleasure, and reputation of our absent Friend, and a solicitous preparation to be in the best posture to receive and honor his expected arrival.

I must, therefore, further observe that there is a wide distinction to be made between a mere willingness to depart, and a truly christian readiness for death. The former may proceed from stupid ignorance and insensibility, from constitutional fortitude or vivacity of temper, from the force of bodily disease, from the influence of flattering religious principles or false enthusiastic hopes, from philosophic pride and affectation, from a boasted sense of honor, or from impatience under the pressure of present calamities. But to be truly ready for the coming of Christ implies something unspeakably nobler ; it denotes that Christ himself is the direct and ultimate object of our desires ; that his perfect likeness and love, his heavenly presence and glory, are the supreme attractive and center of our souls ; and that we have some conscious preparation for and foretaste

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of those elevated pleasures which arise from glorifying and enjoying him in perfection forever.

I ONLY add that since this holy readiness is expressly enjoyed upon us by the authority of our great Lawgiver, it must be viewed not only as the unspeakable privilege of those who possess it, but as the great and indispensable duty of all. It may well be styled the whole duty, as well as happiness of man. And since this command is founded on a dispensation of grace, adapted to the circumstances, and intended for the relief and gradual restoration of fallen creatures, it must involve an encouraging direction to them to seek the requisite qualifications for future happiness in those rational and prescribed methods, in which they are ordinarily obtained. It therefore binds and encourages unprepared sinners to consider their present situation and prospects, to cherish a serious and alarming conviction of their guilt and danger, to attend with solicitous care to all those outward means and inward operations of divine grace, which usually precede and introduce the principle and exercise of christian holiness. It also implies a direction to regenerate and habitual christians to use every suitable and appointed mean for enlivening and perfecting those good dispositions, which are the grand preparation for future glory, and which involve a delightful anticipation and commencement of it.

A THOUSAND arguments crowd upon our minds to engage us to act this reasonable and salutary part. Every thing around us and within us proclaims our destination for a higher and immortal existence, and urges our careful and supreme attention to it. But let us especially consider the motive, which the text places before us; FOR IN SUCH AN HOUR AS YE THINK NOT THE SON OF MAN COMETH.

THESE words imply the certainty of a general judgment, to be administered by the Son of Man; who will come, at the appointed time, to complete the purposes of his mediatorial kingdom in the final reward of his friends, and punishment of his incorrigible foes. This awful and glorious truth is proclaimed by the united voice of nature, providence and revelation. This one truth, properly realized, is sufficient to induce, to compel every sober mind to get ready for a scene so infinitely important.

BUT the text lays peculiar emphasis on a certain circumstance attending our Saviour's coming, I mean the unexpected and surprising manner of it. It shall arrive at such an hour as we think not. It shall suddenly burst upon a careless and slumbering world. It shall arrest them like an invading thief in the night. It shall overwhelm them with surprising terror in the midst of their worldly business and pleasures, just as the deluge of water or of fire came on the guilty inhabitants of the old world, or upon
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the devoted finners of Sodom. With what tenfold horror will this clothe that majestic and dreadful day ! And what an additional motive does it present to constant vigilance and preparation ! In this view the darkness and uncertainty, which involve the time of our Lord's coming, are evidently a wise and merciful appointment. If the precise day and hour of this event were revealed to us, it would essentially injure us in our comfort, duty and interest. If, on the one side, we knew that this all important period was just at hand, it would throw a fatal damp on the necessary cares and enjoyments of life. So near and certain a prospect of a scene so magnificent and tremendous would amaze and distract the minds of unprepared finners, and might unfit even real christians for many of the ordinary duties and comforts of the present state. On the other hand, if we knew that the day of judgment was placed at a very great distance, it would probably diminish and almost annihilate its proper salutary influence upon our temper and conduct. But the awful uncertainty which we feel respecting the time of this grand retribution, tends to awaken and preserve in considerate minds a constant habit of expectation and watchful readiness.

THESE remarks apply with special force to the manner and period of our removal by death. So delicate and complex is the mechanism of our bodies, so latent are the principles of disease and mortality
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in our vitiated constitutions, so far removed from human sight and controul is the direction of natural causes and contingent events in the world around us, that no man can form any probable calculation respecting the time of his dissolution. Accordingly the providence of God is continually baffling and deriding our boasted foresight, our fond computations and prospects. It is frequently surprising us with such instances of death, as contradict every rule of human probability and conjecture ; with such as are awfully sudden and overwhelming to surviving friends and acquaintance : and it does this with the wise and benevolent intention of keeping us tremblingly alive to our dangerous situation, of compelling us to look upon death and eternity as always near, as realities which demand our immediate, solicitous, perpetual attention.

THIS train of thought directly introduces us to that most distressing scene, which Providence has lately presented to this society. Your own memories, imaginations and hearts can do far better justice than any descriptive eloquence of mine, to the astonishment, grief and terror of that memorable evening, which plunged as in a moment eight young persons of your number into a watery grave. I need not describe to you the aggravated woe of a father, struggling at once for his own life, and compelled to witness the perils and the cries of four drowning children around him, without being able to afford

them the least parental assistance. Ye who know the hearts of parents, their indescribable tenderness towards their offspring, think what must have been your sensations, if ye had beheld only one of your beloved children in a situation like this ! How unspeakably then is the surviving father indebted to the goodness of God for preserving him in so sound, collected and tranquil a state amid so distracting and overwhelming a scene ; for keeping him from sinking into instant death under the pressure of such a spectacle !

I HOPE, my mourning friend, that you will ever seriously retain and improve the many remarkable circumstances of this singular providence. I am far from urging you to dwell on such painful reflections and images as tend only to aggravate your unavailing grief, or to swell the tide of that worldly sorrow which worketh death. No—let me rather assist you to such reflections as will enable you to reap a harvest of spiritual joy from your present flowing tears. O think of your own narrow escape from the opening jaws of death. Think of the difference made by Providence between you and another father of a family, who was also united to you by the same common habitation. He was apparently in possession of equal ability and advantages with you to rescue his life from the threatening danger ; yet he is snatched from a young dependent family, and hurried in an unexpected hour before the tribunal of his Judge ; while your connexion with a number of dear surviv-

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ing children, and your precious opportunities of securing your own and their salvation are mercifully prolonged. Can you help asking your conscience, on this affecting occasion, whether, if your lot had been like his, you were ready to accompany him and your drowning children to the bar of Christ; whether your habitual disposition and practice as a man, as a parent, as a professor of christianity, have been such, as would have given you humble boldness and triumph in the presence of your Judge? You cannot forget, my friend, the solemn hour when you stood forth in this congregation, and took God's covenant into your mouth, openly dedicating yourself and your offspring to his service and disposal. The great question, to which God now calls your attention, is, whether you have honestly fulfilled this engagement? whether you still adhere to the spirit of your christian profession? whether you feel cordially resigned to the will of a covenant-God in the late trying dispensation? I know this duty is hard to flesh and blood; but both reason and revelation, as well as your own solemn vows, indispenfibly require it. And while it becomes you submissively to endure the stroke, which has destroyed so large a part of your family, it equally concerns you to improve their sudden death as a call to the most serious attention to the best interests of your surviving offspring. Remember that such an alarming and instructive providence demands a very solemn and fruitful improvement.

ment. It is our earnest prayer that you and your remaining children may be soften'd under the repeated strokes of God's chastening rod, and be refreshed with those spiritual comforts, which shall far more than compensate the loss of earthly delights.

MAY the Widow, who has suddenly lost a husband, be hereby effectually convinced of the vanity of all human and worldly props, and be brought to rest the whole weight of her concerns, both personal and domestic, on the providence and the gracious declaration of that all-sufficient and faithful Being, who has stiled himself the Father of the fatherless, the Husband and Judge of the widow.

MAY those mourning parents, each of whom has followed a daughter to an unexpected grave; and those tender grand-parents, who have buried the daughter of a lately deceased child, one who had been, if I may so speak, nourished in their bosoms from infancy almost to mature age; may they recall to mind & labor to imitate the noble example of a pious parent on sacred record, who was able to bless the name of the Lord under the surprising and tragical bereavement of all his children by one sudden stroke. Let them remember the behaviour of Aaron, who meekly held his peace, when he saw his two eldest sons struck dead in a moment, in the act of transgression, by a blast of divine vengeance. Let them aspire to tread in the glorious steps of the father of the faithful, who with
serene

serene and cheerful submission, offered up on the altar his Isaac, his favorite Son, at the divine command. Above all, let them turn their eyes to Jesus, the Son of God, who in their stead and for their salvation willingly drank a cup unspeakably more bitter than that, which Providence now puts into their hands. O may they honor and please a correcting God, edify their surrounding families and friends, and derive the richest enjoyment and benefit to themselves, by exhibiting the spirit of their suffering Master, saying in their hearts and visible behavior, **FATHER, NOT OUR WILLS, BUT THINE BE DONE.**

MAY the other families and individuals, who are thrown into the train of mourners ; who lament a beloved niece, an active and faithful domestic superintendent, or a young friend endeared by the more soft and powerful ties of youthful love ; may they all learn those excellent lessons, which such an uncommon scene so awfully inculcates. May they, as well as the whole circle of the bereaved, learn to cease from man ; to set their affections on things above ; to place their supreme, their unbounded love and dependence upon that object, which alone can stand by them and make them happy in every vicissitude, in every trial both of life and of death. May they find an unfailing source of peace and joy in the contemplation of the perfect character and government of the Most High, and the glorious and happy effects, in which the present mysteries of providence

will finally terminate ; and may their hearts cleave more entirely to the sovereign beauty and good, now those dear idols are removed, which once occupied too large a place in their bosoms.

MAY the children and youth of this congregation, those especially who are nearly connected with the deceased, hear and obey the warning voice, which speaks to them from the graves of so many of their young friends, who were one minute triumphing in youthful vigour and gaiety, and the next struggling in the arms of death. This, my dear youths, is the most affecting call to you, that ever yet reached your ears. It holds up before your eyes a glass, in which, methinks, you cannot avoid seeing the vanity of those sources of joy and security, in which young minds too commonly place unlimited confidence. It teaches you the folly of idolizing those charms of beauty or ornaments of dress, which may so quickly, like the drowned bodies of your late companions, be turned into spectacles of ghastly deformity. It teaches you the folly of depending on that brisk flow of blood, which a thousand unforeseen accidents may immediately stop, or that high toned vigour, which the strong arm of death can so quickly subdue. It teaches you in the most forcible manner, the importance of early experimental religion, or an immediate and constant readiness to meet your Judge. You have often, my dear children, been warned

warned and reprov'd. This occasion recalls to my mind the many tender, though, alas, very imperfect instructions and admonitions, which you have heretofore received from the person now addressing you, when he stood in the important relation of your Pastor. While the present affecting interview, calls into fresh and lively exercise, his tenderness for the surviving lambs of this flock, it renews his former intreaties to them, in Christ's stead, to be reconcil'd to God, and to come immediately into the fold of that great and good Shepherd, who gathers the lambs with his arms, and carries them in his bosom, and who out of the mouths of babes and sucklings perfects his praise.

I would also express my hearty sympathy with this whole Society, under the late distressing rebuke of heaven; and would call upon its members seriously to inquire, wherefore it is that God is thus contending with them. Though we detest the thought of construing this extraordinary calamity into a proof of singular guilt in the suffering Society, yet certainly such an eminent divine chastisement must have an important moral reason and design. It should therefore awaken not only the mourning families, but the bereaved congregation in general, to great searchings of heart, to holy fear and trembling, to penitent humiliation, fervent prayer, and thorough reformation. It should lead them to put
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away every offensive and accursed thing from their hearts, their houses, and their public proceedings as a christian church and society. It should engage them to such a prudent and exemplary deportment in their present critical situation, as may conduce to their own union and edification, as may recommend their character and religious profession to the surrounding world, and secure to them and their children the gracious presence and blessing of God.

IN a word, let us all obey the command, **BE YE ALSO READY.** Think, ye unprepared and careless sinners, on what a dangerous precipice you stand. You are liable every moment to drop into the pit of endless ruin. The Psalmist had an affecting view of the dreadful condition of such persons as you, even in their greatest worldly prosperity. Beholding with a prophetic eye, their hastening doom, he exclaims, *Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.* Think, on the other hand, of the unspeakable comfort and benefit of a constant readiness for the coming of Christ. This involves or produces a readiness for every thing else, for every duty and every event. It prepares us to enjoy and improve every blessing, and suitably to comport with every affliction. If you, my brethren of this Society, are carefully engaged

gaged in preparing to meet your Judge, and are conscious of such preparation, you will be led to feel and act properly in all your other affairs ; you will be ready to unite in the best measures for the re-settlement of the gospel ministry in this place ; you will be prepared to receive a good minister of Jesus Christ, or to be providentially disappointed of so great a blessing. In short, you will be ready to welcome the whole will of God, to welcome sickness, pain, bereavement, death : you will receive these and other bitter ingredients in the cup of your present existence, as a proper and needful discipline intend by heaven to complete your preparation for unmixed & endless felicity. Under the impression of such views you will be prepared to echo those noble strains of the Psalmist—*The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble : therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.*



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